

Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's Impact Movement Statement for the Record

United States Senate Special Committee on Aging Hearing on "Awareness to Action: Combating Elder Abuse & Neglect"

July 30, 2025

The Alzheimer's Association and Alzheimer's Impact Movement (AIM) appreciate the opportunity to submit this statement for the record for the Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing on **"Awareness to Action: Combating Elder Abuse & Neglect."** We thank the Committee for its continued leadership on issues crucial to individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementia. This statement underscores the urgent and ongoing need for robust federal efforts to prevent and address elder abuse and neglect within the dementia community, one of the nation's most vulnerable and fastest-growing populations.

Founded in 1980, the Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support, and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease and other dementias through the advancement of research, to provide and enhance care and support for all affected, and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. AIM is the Association's advocacy affiliate, working in a strategic partnership to make Alzheimer's a national priority. Together, the Alzheimer's Association and AIM advocate for policies to fight Alzheimer's disease, including increased investment in research, improved care and support, and the development of approaches to reduce the risk of developing dementia.

Over 7 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's dementia in 2025. Total payments for all individuals with Alzheimer's or other dementias are estimated at \$384 billion (not including unpaid caregiving) in 2025. Medicare and Medicaid are expected to cover \$246 billion or 64 percent of the total health care and long-term care payments for people with Alzheimer's or other dementias, which are projected to increase to more than \$1 trillion by 2050. These mounting costs threaten to bankrupt families, businesses, and our health care system. Unfortunately, our work is only growing more urgent.

Prevalence and Impact of Elder Abuse

People living with Alzheimer's and other dementia are especially susceptible to elder abuse, and unfortunately, due to the nature of the disease, the individual may not be aware that the abuse is occurring or be able to communicate the issue, making it harder to identify. In fact, as many as 62% of older adults with dementia experience psychological abuse, and as many as one-fourth have been physically abused. Additionally, one study found that 60% of elderly victims of sexual abuse have cognitive impairment, and 31% of adults with dementia have experienced more than one form of abuse. Elder abuse can occur in any care setting and by anyone, including family members, health care providers, strangers, and others. The trauma of elder abuse can result in premature death, the deterioration of physical and psychological health, the destruction of social and familial ties, devastating financial loss, and more.

As a first responder, it's critical to understand how to best approach situations involving someone living with dementia. The Alzheimer's Association is proud to offer [Approaching Alzheimer's: First Responder Training](#) – a free, online course for first responders. This training equips participants with the knowledge and [resources](#) needed to effectively recognize and respond to common situations involving individuals living with dementia. Developed with input from first responders, the training offers: 24/7 access, making it convenient for all shifts and new hires, learning through a self-paced, online curriculum, videos, and interactive activities, and training available on any device, including laptop, tablet or mobile device. The program helps ensure first responders are better prepared to ensure safe, compassionate, and effective interactions with those living with dementia.

Legislative Progress

As the Committee continues exploring ways to strengthen protections for older adults, we also recognize the significant legislative progress already made to combat elder abuse nationwide. Signed into law in December 2020, the Promoting Alzheimer's Awareness to Prevent Elder Abuse Act (P.L. 116-252) is helping people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias by ensuring professionals, such as police officers, medical personnel, and prosecutors, have the dementia-specific training they need to better protect these individuals from elder abuse. This critical law ensures that professionals receive dementia-specific training to better understand and respond to the unique vulnerabilities of people living with dementia. People living with dementia often have difficulty understanding or explaining situations, and their behaviors may be misunderstood as uncooperative, disruptive, or combative. Dementia-specific training materials for these professionals will improve the quality of their interactions with individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementia, and will also help protect them from elder abuse. We are grateful for the Committee's bipartisan leadership on this important law.

We are also proud to support additional bipartisan legislation aimed at improving seniors' access to legal services and ensuring safer interactions with law enforcement. For example, the Alzheimer's Law Enforcement Education Act (H.R. 3389) would create a new training program for law enforcement officers responding to patients with Alzheimer's disease. In addition, the Linking Seniors to Needed Legal Services Act (H.R. 8588, 118th Congress) would create a grant program for individual states to develop medical-legal partnerships to establish, improve, or maintain linkages between health and social services for vulnerable seniors in healthcare settings. These linkages would help meet vulnerable patients' social and legal needs that can be detrimental to overall health when unmet, such as housing, food, education, and access to care.

Conclusion

The Alzheimer's Association and AIM appreciate the Committee's steadfast support and commitment to advancing issues important to the millions of individuals living with Alzheimer's and other dementia, as well as their caregivers. We look forward to working with the Committee and other members of Congress in a bipartisan way to advance policies to enhance protections and combat elder abuse and neglect, especially as the population of Americans living with dementia continues to grow.